



MN - GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM SCORING WORKSHEET

June 2005

Participant: _____

Tract no. _____

Land being offered is privately owned and is currently being utilized as grass forage or meets the definition of eligible lands and is 40 contiguous acres or larger in size. Yes____ No____

If no, the application will be a lower priority for FY 2005 and will not be scored.

EXCEPTION:

- Existing grazing operations consisting of at least 25 – 39 contiguous acres of eligible land are eligible if they also have at least 20 animal units (AU) currently utilizing the forage.
- Existing remnant native prairie.

Evaluation Criteria

Circle the correct point value for each criteria

I. <u>Threats to Conversion Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>
A. Potential to be converted from grassland to cropland.	
• predominant offered acres are in Land Capability Class 1 and 2	20
• predominant offered acres are in Land Capability Class 3, 4, and 6	15
• predominant offered acres are in Land Capability Class 7 and 8	5
B. Potential for accepted offers to require additional operation and maintenance due to Invasive Woody Species. Location score to be determined based on the pre-settlement vegetation (Trygg Maps).	
• Area offered is located in the historic Tallgrass Prairie area	5
• Area offered is located in the historic Transition area	3
• Area offered is in the historic Forested Area	0
II. <u>Supporting Grazing Operations</u>	
A. Area offered is part of an Existing Grazing Operation	
• Managed Grazing	20
• Continuous Grazing	10
• Used for Hay or seed production	8
• No Grazing or Haying (negative points)	-20
B. Water Quality Benefits	
• Area offered includes or is immediately adjacent to a perennial stream or permanent water body and current management limits or controls the access of livestock to these waters.	5
• All other offers	0
III. <u>Maintaining and Preserving Biodiversity</u>	
A. Existing predominant vegetation on area offered (biodiversity)	
• Native grass or prairie remnant or plant community of high or outstanding	30

- quality based on the Natural Heritage Database
- Native grass that has been planted or restored 20
- Native grass that will be re-established without cost share 15
- Mixed stand of at least 4 species of introduced grass and legumes 10
- Mixed stand less than 4 species 3
- Predominately single species 0

B. Federal or State Threatened, Endangered or Species of Special Concern
(maximum of 15 points total for this factor).

- Plants listed on the Natural Heritage Database are found on the site 10
- Plants listed on the Natural Heritage Database are found immediately adjacent to the site 7
- Animals listed on the Natural Heritage Database are found within 1 mile of the site 5
- All other offers 0

C. Location Significance - area offered is within one mile of another open land protected area that is managed with the same biodiversity goals as GRP and that adjacent protected area is:

- > 200 acres in size 5
- 150 – 200 acres in size 3
- 100 – 150 acres 2
- 40 – 100 acres 1
- All other offers 0

Total Points – Section I (0-25) _____
 Total Points – Section II (0-25) _____
 Total Points – Section II (0-59) _____

TOTAL POINTS FOR OFFER _____
 (maximum of 105)

If a tie breaker is required offers will be grouped by type (easement or agreement) and the offer with the least cost per acre will be ranked higher.

The following information is not used in the scoring but will be needed for approval purposes:

Type of GRP agreement offered (check one):

Rental Agreement ____ 10 year ____ 15 year ____ 20 year ____ 30 year

Easement ____ 30 year ____ Permanent

Total Acres Offered _____

Enter to nearest whole dollar

Estimated total cost of rental agreement \$ _____ (Annual rental rate x total acres x length of contract)

Estimated total cost of easement \$ _____ (Estimated easement cost x total acres)

Guidance for Ranking Criteria

GENERAL INFORMATION

Contiguous acres – On a tract basis - acres are considered to be contiguous if the grasslands are capable of being utilized by livestock on the entire tract regardless of existing fences, land uses or current management. This means that the acres do not need to be physically connected. **On a multiple tract basis** - when grassland acres will be offered on multiple tracts the offered acreage on the tracts must be physically connected together to be eligible.

CONVERSION CONSIDERATIONS

IA. Threat to conversion to cropland: Points under this category are assigned based on the classification of the predominant soil map units being converted to cropland. These classifications can be found in Section 2 of the Field Office Technical Guide, which is available on line at www.mn.usda.gov.

IB. Invasive Species: Threat to accepted offers being converted or requiring additional operation and maintenance due to invasive woody species. Score points for this factor based on the Trygg map.

SUPPORTING GRAZING OPERATIONS

IIA. Grazing operation: A grazing operation is defined as one that has livestock and/or animals which utilize the forage and where significant agricultural income is derived from the grazing operation. Small hobby farms and those operations with insignificant animal numbers (less than 10 animal units) will not be considered as a grazing operation.

IIB. Water Quality: Existing grazing operations using management that protects water quality benefits can score additional points.

MAINTAINING AND PRESEVING BIODIVERSITY

IIIA. Existing native grassland and biodiversity: Offers containing unique native prairie or restored native grassland are given priority over introduced grass/legume mixtures. The Natural Heritage Database can be used to identify existing native plant communities.

IIIB. Federal or State Threatened, Endangered or Species of Special concern: The Natural Heritage Database will be used to determine points for this category. Assign these points when the area offered is a known habitat (on site for plants and within one mile for animals) for at-risk species. The conservation plan will address habitat requirements for the identified animal or plant.

IIIC. Location significance: Protected areas for assigning these points are defined as: 1) public lands, such as refuges and wildlife management areas that are managed for an open landscape; 2) private lands that are under a permanent conservation easement such as WRP, CREP, RIM, and other GRP acres and are managed for an open landscape. Land enrolled in limited duration conservation programs and that is not under a permanent easement, does not qualify as protected areas under this category.